ORIGINAL

	ONIONAL
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2	KENNETH DAVIDSON, JR. DOCKET NUMBER: 11-09458
3	VERSUS OFFICE OF WORKER'S COMPENSATION
4	DISTRICT 03
5	NORTHROP GRUMMAN STATE OF LOUISIANA
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9	DEPOSITION OF THOMAS FARMER
10	Taken June 7, 2012
11	commencing at 9:04 a.m.
12	206 East University Street
13	Siloam Springs, Arkansas
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18	REPORTED BY: SHEILA B. ALEXANDER, CCR, RMR, CRR Certified Court Reporter
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1	APPEARANCES
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3	ON BEHALF OF THE CLAIMANT:
4	MR. J. CHRISTIAN LEWIS (VIA TELEPHONE) The Glenn Armentor Law Corporation
5	300 Stewart Street Lafayette, Louisiana 70501
6	(337) 233-1471
7	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT:
8	MR. CHRISTOPHER M. TRAHAN (VIA TELEPHONE) Raggio, Cappel, Chozen & Berniard
9	1011 Lakeshore Drive, Fifth Floor Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601
	(337) 436-9481
10	Also Present:
11	Mr. and Mrs. Davidson (Via Telephone)
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1 THOMAS FARMER, 2 having been first duly cautioned and sworn by me to 3 testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, testified on his oath as follows, to wit: 4 5 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. LEWIS: 6 7 Mr. Farmer, good morning. This is Christian Lewis. I'm the attorney for Kenneth Davidson. 8 9 We're taking your deposition by telephone. You are 10 in Arkansas, obviously, and we are in Lafayette, 11 Louisiana, and I want the record to reflect that. 12 Present here today in our conference room is Mr. and 13 Mrs. Davidson and also the attorney for Northrop Grumman. 14 His name is Mr. Christopher Trahan. And after I get 15 through, he may have some questions for you. 16 What I'd like to first start with is if you would 17 please identify your name and your address. It's Thomas Farmer. I'm a Florida resident. 18 19 1119 Harbor Lane, Gulf Breeze. And my permanent mailing address here in Arkansas that I use is 819 South 20 21 Washington, Siloam Springs. And how old are you, Mr. Farmer? 22 0. 23 I'm 62. A. And what is your profession? 24 Q.

I've been a commercial pilot most of my life.

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- Q. And are you currently employed with anyone?
- 2 A. No.

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- Q. Who was the last employer that you worked with?
- 4 A. Northrop Grumman.
- 5 Q. And how long did you work with Northrop Grumman?
- 6 A. I believe about three, four years, approximately.
- 7 Q. And were you employed with Northrop Grumman in May
- 8 of 2011?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. Mr. Davidson has filed with the Louisiana workers'
- 11 compensation office a claim asserting injuries that
- 12 resulted from a flight that occurred in May of 2011. And
- 13 one of the reasons that we're here today is to get
- 14 | information about that flight.
- I'm told that you were the pilot of the flight where
- 16 an incident occurred involving fumes. Is that correct?
- 17 A. Yes, sir.
- 18 | Q. And was the date that this incident occurred
- 19 May 31st, 2011?
- 20 A. Yes, sir.
- 21 0. In your own words, could you describe for us what
- 22 | happened on that date?
- 23 A. Well, we made the flight. Of course, prior to that
- 24 || flight, a different pilot had flown the plane and
- 25 complained of the fumes and smoke and said, "The airplane

needs to be fixed, shouldn't be flown anymore," and he basically said he wasn't going to fly it anymore. So --

- Q. Was that Bill O'Connor?
- A. Yes, sir.

And so Ken Davidson and myself were asked to go fly a flight a few days later to verify those smoke and fumes which they knew the airplane was making. We really didn't want to do it, but, you know, it's your -- when it's your job, you -- most of the time an employer, especially our managers, pressed the issue pretty -- pretty hard to go ahead and fly the plane.

And about -- well, as soon as you get in the plane, you smell the smoke and fumes, but we went ahead and flew -- flew the mission or attempted to. And about -- oh, right after takeoff, you know, the fumes were there.

The smoke came later.

But during -- during that one-hour flight or, you know, a little over an hour, after we got up to altitude and -- I think 28,000 feet, the -- the smoke and fumes were so bad that burning eyes, coughing, and more difficulty breathing.

I asked Ken how he was feeling, and of course, he was -- appeared to me to be about, you know, halfway intoxicated. And I -- I told him, I said, "I don't feel competent with the safety of the flight anymore," and we

were going to abort the flight.

I contacted ATC. We got an immediate descent.

Because at that altitude, the smoke and fumes are a lot stronger than they are at a lower altitude. So we got the airplane down as soon as we could, depressurized the cabin, tried to clear the smoke. I used oxygen as much as I could, because I was kind of concerned about how -- how safe I would be and if we could even make it to the airport.

But we did find our way back to the airport, landed. And to be honest with you, I -- neither one of us, Ken or myself, can remember how we got back to the hotel from the airport.

And we reported that incident to our supervisors back at Northrop Grumman in Peachtree City. And they -- the best I can remember, they was kind of disgusted, you know, because they really expected us to continue flying the plane and discredit the previous pilot's report.

And from then on, we were kind of treated like traitors to the company.

But Ken, I know, was at that time -- I can't think of the word to describe it, but he was kind of out of it, and I think both of us were pretty well overwhelmed by the fumes.

Q. Where did that flight that you and Mr. Davidson have

1 | originate?

- 2 A. In Schenectady, just out of Albany, New York.
- 3 Q. That's in -- that's in New York; correct?
- 4 A. Yes, sir.
- 5 Q. And do you have the identifiers for that particular
- 6 plane that you were flying?
- 7 A. It's November 690 echo hotel.
- 8 Q. And what kind of plane was it?
- 9 A. That's a -- designated an AC-90. It's a Turbo
- 10 Commander.
- 11 | Q. And do you know the manufacturer?
- 12 A. Originally Rockwell Commander, and I think they've
- 13 been in and out of the manufacturing business, and I think
- 14 | Air Research -- I'm not sure who's responsible for the
- 15 | airframe at this point.
- 16 Q. Where were you and Mr. Davidson relative to one
- 17 | another while the flight was going? I, obviously, presume
- 18 | that you're in the pilot seat. Where was Mr. Davidson
- 19 located?
- 20 A. He's about three-quarters of the way back in the
- 21 | cabin to the rear.
- 22 Q. And is there any divider or separator or door that
- 23 separates where you were from from Mr. Davidson?
- 24 A. No. It's -- it's an open cabin and cockpit
- 25 | configuration. And actually, Mr. Davidson sits in the

area where the -- those smoke and fumes first enter the cabin.

- Q. And approximately in feet how far away would he have been from where you were flying the airplane?
- A. Oh, 10 -- 10 feet maybe.

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- Q. Do you at this time know what the source of the fumes were?
- 8 Well, they're -- there's only one source of air to 9 come into the cabin, and that's through the -- excuse 10 me -- the bleed air system. The -- the airplane is 11 pressurized, heat and air, off from bleed air from the 12 engines. It goes through what's called an air cycle machine where -- with an evaporator and condensers and 13 14 turned into pressurized air and, of course, heating and 15 cooling. And there is no -- there is no other air source.
- 16 Q. Do you know what was causing the fumes on that 17 flight?
 - A. Yeah. It -- I'd been flying that airplane for almost three years previous to that, and we constantly complained about the smoke and the fumes.

It's -- it's a common problem with those airplanes and most all airplanes that use the TPE331 engines.

The -- if there's any -- any kind of oil leakage around the engine seals or around the engine inlet, that oil is introduced directly into the bleed air.

Of course, after high temperature and pressure and -- breaks down -- that oil back down into organophosphates, tricresyl phosphates, which are highly toxic. And that air goes into the air cycle machine, which if it's malfunctioning, further contaminates the air with fumes and smoke.

And in that airplane's condition it was in at the time will overheat the ductwork and further irritate the situation with basically the cooked materials in that ductwork, which even adds a whole new array of -- of chemicals and by-products of being overheated.

When you're at the higher altitude where it can be, you know, minus 20 degrees would require more heat and more air for the pressurization. And at some point, that system in that aircraft will use direct bleed air into the cabin without going through the air cycle machine to augment the cabin pressurization and heat.

And for a long time, which we complained about and it never was fixed, the temperature control would go full hot and basically just, like I said, cook the ductwork and overheat everything, and that's where you get the smoke, also.

So that pretty much, I think, summarizes the -- the source. And there is no other source for heat, air, smoke, and the fumes.

Q. How long do you estimate that you and Mr. Davidson were exposed to these fumes on that flight of May 31st, 2011?

- A. From the time we got in the cabin. I mean those -that -- those materials are kind of impregnated in the
 interior of the aircraft from previous flights, so from
 the time we got in the cabin till -- till we landed, which
 was I think -- I'd have to look at the logbooks, but I
 think it was over an hour, probably an hour and a half, a
 good hour and a half of exposure.
 - Q. You mentioned that people knew about this problem.

 Who was it that knew about this particular problem before this flight that you -- that you know of firsthand?

 A. Our managers. Dennis Monday; probably the fleet manager; the chief pilot, Matt Boone; the ops manager, Dan Burke; and most all the pilots and operators in the company knew of the smoke and fumes that were involved with that airplane.

Some of them just got to the point they refused to fly in it because of the -- but it -- but everybody in the maintenance department was aware of the airplane. And then in our management, they were -- they were informed almost daily, practically every flight about the -- you know, the fumes and the smoke that I would complain about as well as the other pilots, also.

Q. Now, during this particular flight, did you personally witness any symptoms or problems that

Mr. Davidson was experiencing? I think you indicated that you felt like he appeared to be intoxicated. Describe what -- what you witnessed.

A. Rubbing his eyes a little bit.

And to back up. Since we were on kind of a verification test flight to verify the other pilot's report, I told -- I told Mr. Davidson to write down his notes if he would, you know, how he felt through the flight. I did the same. As, you know, most anybody in that kind of business does.

But his eyes were -- I could tell his eyes were burning; mine were. So he, you know, was coughing a little bit. And as we got to the higher altitude, you know, then you could see that oily mist come in the cabin, which it always did. And just kind of a burning sensation in your lungs, feeling like you -- real bad taste in your mouth.

You can't -- you can't think as well. I think I -when I looked around and saw, after two or three times,

Ken just sort of dazing out the -- out the window, I knew
he wasn't able to do his job very well, and I was already
to the point where I -- I really was uncomfortable in the
airplane, and I knew he was feeling the same thing I was.

1 So we -- I told him we were calling it off and going home.

Q. Are you aware of any testing that was done on this particular airplane after this flight?

A. I wasn't -- I wasn't there when the air test took place, but I wanted -- I had been wanting an air test done on the airplane for a long time, which they wouldn't -- didn't feel like doing.

But at this point, you know, we grounded the airplane and re -- you know, just refused to fly it. It had to be fixed before anybody was going to fly it anymore. Of course, they said they were fixing it and never did, but...

Q. I'm told and I think I've seen a document that indicates Northrop Grumman ran some perhaps environmental tests and weren't able to identify any kind of problem. I don't know if you had heard that or read the information along those lines. Have you?

A. Yeah. We -- me and the other pilot were told in a meeting -- we never were shown or given copies of the air quality test, but we were told there was nothing wrong with it, that there was no -- no oil or chemicals or, you know, carbon monoxides, everything was well below the acceptable standards.

But there is no standard for testing the air inside of an aircraft. I always felt like that test was -- was

irrelevant, because it didn't pertain really to -- to a small cabin in an airplane where you have to have good fresh air. It's not like a machine shop where you expect to be exposed to oil.

And even the test later, I was told, did say there was an oily mist in the air, and we were told by supervisors that the air was clean and there was no oily mist or smoke.

- Q. Are you familiar with a gentleman named John Probst?
- A. Yes. He's our maintenance -- or he was the maintenance director for Northrop in Peachtree City at
- 12 | that time.

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- Q. Do you know what, if any, role he had in -- in investigating this particular incident?
- A. Well, it's directly his responsibility to ensure
 the -- the safety and the quality of the aircraft that we
 fly. He's directly responsible for -- for all the
- 18 | maintenance.
- Q. Since this incident, have you had any kind of ongoing problems as a result of it?
- A. Yes, I'm afraid so. The -- the same problems

 I've -- that I've talked with other people about. It's

 the sometimes inability to think clearly, headaches all

 the time, feeling of intoxication a lot, fatigue far more

 than -- fatigue and depression more than -- than in a lot

of cases, and a little short-term memory loss and just -just generally not being able to think and solve problems
as well as -- as you would before being exposed to these
organophosphates.

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No.

- Q. Has Northrop Grumman or its insurer provided you any kind of medical care at this point?
- 7 After the -- after that flight on May 31st, yes, 8 some doctor visits. And then I don't -- I'm not sure what 9 Ken's status is. But mine, the worker comp company, after I called them, I said I needed to see -- continue some 10 11 work with a doctor in Pensacola and another doctor in San 12 Francisco. She kind of laughed at me, said, "No, we're 13 not going to give you any authorizations for any more 14 doctor visits at all." And I said, "Well, you know, 15 before you guys said that the doctor visits were your 16 responsibility." And she just kind of laughed and said, 17 "No, you're -- we're not going to do anything for you."
 - Q. Was this Ms. Jean Gallina, I believe?
 - referred me to the Chartis caseworker for me. I can't remember her name, but -- but it was the worker comp nurse that told me that I wasn't going to get any more help from worker comp.

Jean Gallina, the Northrop Grumman nurse, she

Q. Have you been able to return to piloting and to work since this incident?

- A. No. No, I've pretty much taken myself out of commercial aviation. I really don't feel safe in the aircraft anymore.
- Q. Has Northrop Grumman provided you any kind of
 substitute wage benefit -- we call it indemnity benefits
 here in Louisiana, but any kind of substitute wage
 benefits since you haven't been able to work as a pilot?
- A. No. They've been pretty much unresponsive, every -
 everyone in the company that I've tried to talk with.
- 10 Q. Have you been able to return to any form of work at this point?
- 12 A. No.
- Q. Mr. Farmer, I think that's all the questions I have at this point.
- Mr. Trahan, the attorney for Northrop Grumman, may
 have some questions for you. I believe the office that
 we're borrowing today will have to use the conference room
 at 10 o'clock, so I'm going to turn the questions over to
 Mr. Trahan at this point.
- 20 A. Okay.
- 21 CROSS EXAMINATION
- 22 BY MR. TRAHAN:
- 23 O. Mr. Farmer.
- 24 A. Yes, sir.
- 25 Q. This is Chris Trahan. I'm Northrop Grumman's

attorney.

Did you ever fly that particular aircraft again after May 21st of 2011?

- A. Yes. We were -- we were told by Dennis Monday, Matt Boone, supervisors, to take the aircraft back to Peachtree; we wouldn't be flying it on missions anymore; and -- but the only way that I told them we would fly the plane is on two hops and at low altitude unpressurized without the use of any heat or air. So yeah, we -- the next day, June the 1st, we did return the aircraft to Peachtree for maintenance.
- Q. And did you ever fly the aircraft again after
 June 1st of 2011?
- A. I flew the airplane several times after it was -
 after I was told that it -- the cabin air problems were

 fixed.
- Q. And did you have any more problems, or at least did
 you have problems as bad as what you had on May 31st?
 - A. I think the first test flight after that, it was -it was the same. The smoke, the oily -- the oily air, the
 smoke and fumes did come into the cabin. And this went
 on, I think, maybe a half dozen times.

And Bill O'Connor, the other pilot, flew, I think, a couple of those test flights as well as I did. And I only remember one flight afterwards, maybe three months later,

that all the equipment was replaced, every -- new 1 ductwork, and the air did -- was acceptable at that time. 2 3 But almost immediately and on the later flights, the problem reoccurred. 4 5 Are you saying that -- okay. I'm kind of confused Are you saying roughly three months after this 6 7 incident, you recall one flight when they had changed all 8 the ductwork and the system seemed to operating correctly; is that what you're saying? 9 Well, it was operating not -- not completely clean 10 11 like it should be, but it was, I thought, acceptable. But within a couple of weeks of work, the equipment 12 13 all went -- went bad again. The ducts overheated. air cycle machine was bringing the smoke and the fumes and 14 the oily mist back into the airplane. And eventually it 15 16 was grounded permanently. 17 How long did you continue to fly for Northrop

Q. How long did you continue to fly for Northron Grumman after this incident of May 31st, 2011?

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A. I stayed with them from -- from May 31st to January the 17th and flew a twin piston engine plane a few flights and probably, oh, maybe 50 hours -- flight hours or so.

But -- but at -- I can't remember exactly when, what the date was, but the 690 echo hotel, the Turbo Commander, was grounded at that time permanently.

Q. Okay. But you're telling me that even after you

ceased flying six niner zero echo hotel, you did fly some
twin-engine -- twin piston-engine Cessna aircraft for
Northrop Grumman; is that correct?

- A. Yes, but with -- but not -- not in the same capacity that I'd flown previously.
- Q. How was the capacity different?

A. Well, the workload is significantly less in the piston twins. The job -- job's much easier.

But I still felt the same symptoms. The symptoms that Ken Davidson and I experienced never did completely go away. And it was on my mind throughout that whole period if I really should be flying the airplane or not.

I did consult with a couple of doctors and discussed the issue with them, and they said: "You -- you know, your heart's good. You can walk and talk. It's up to you. But when you don't feel safe in the airplane anymore, you've got to make that decision to -- to stop."

And that's the decision I made later.

But even on those flights after May 31st, I never did feel comfortable as -- as I did previously.

- Q. You say you last worked for Northrop Grumman

 January 17, 2012. Did you voluntarily leave, or were you laid off because of a lack of work?
- A. The -- they said it was a lack of work. I was actually trying to get -- I was wanting to go to work in

- 1 the UAV part of their aviation, but never -- never had any
- 2 | luck with that. But yeah, it was -- it was -- we were
- 3 | told it was due to lack of work.
- 4 Q. Okay. And have you applied for any flying jobs
- 5 | since you were laid off by Northrop Grumman?
- 6 A. No.
- 7 | Q. Have you taken any -- what class of medical
- 8 certificate did you have at the time of this incident?
- 9 Did you have a second class or a first class?
- 10 A. Second.
- 11 Q. And have you been back to have a renewal of your
- 12 second class medical certificate since May 31st of 2011?
- 13 A. Yes. I think it was last month. But it was -- and
- 14 I discussed with the doctor the condition that we were in.
- 15 Q. And did you have to get a second class certificate
- 16 again or not?
- 17 A. Yes, I've got -- I do have a certificate now.
- 18 Q. And where -- you saw an AMB, that's an aviation
- 19 | medical examiner, for your physical; is that correct?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 | O. Where was he located?
- 22 A. It's in the Occupational Health Center of
- 23 | Springdale, Arkansas.
- Q. And you say he did, in fact, give you a second class
- 25 | certificate; is that right?

A. Yes.

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- Q. You mentioned that the engine in this particular
- 3 | type of aircraft is a TPE331; is that correct?
- 4 A. The engine, yes.
- 5 Q. I'm sorry. Go ahead, sir.
- 6 A. Yeah, that's the engine, yes.
- 7 Q. And you said something about, is this correct, that
- 8 | these particular engines, in your -- at least in your
- 9 opinion, have a particular problem with oil leaking past
- 10 | the seals and causing fumes in the cabin. Is that your
- 11 | opinion?
- 12 A. Yeah. I've flown the airplanes quite a bit in the
- 13 past, MU-2s and Commanders and some Dornier turboprop
- 14 | aircraft. They basically all use the same air cycle
- 15 | machine configuration. And once they have a -- an engine
- 16 | seal problem or a degradation in the air cycle machine
- 17 | itself, they produce smoke and fumes.
- 18 Q. Okay. What I want to find out from you here is I
- 19 | gather you're saying this has been your experience with
- 20 | those particular class of engines on this aircraft and
- 21 other aircraft using those engines, but have you read any
- 22 | literature produced by the manufacturers or anything else
- 23 | that would tell you that -- or support your position that
- 24 | these engines are particularly prone to this type of
- 25 problem?

Α. Yeah, I've read -- I can't -- I can't quote or tell you exactly what I've read when or where, but I have read 3 documentation and talked to a lot of maintenance people, even the -- the maintenance people that have worked on 690 4 5 echo hotel for many years.

Russell Hampton in Oklahoma City, he -- he identified that problem and said it had -- was common in existence.

- Can you identify anybody else by name who's told you that was a common problem with these engines?
- Reese Howell in Tennessee that was flying MU-2s and 11 331 engines for many, many years. Bob Kidd, Tulsa, 12
- Oklahoma, who ran a 331 engine shop for a long time. 13
- Peter Schiff who designed a completely different air cycle 14
- machine system is familiar, and I've talked with him about 15
- it, so it's -- but -- and there's probably a half a dozen 16
- others. I can't remember at the time. 17
- 18 Okay. Have you -- when's the last time you actually
- 19 flew any airplane as a pilot in command, sir, either for
- 20 commercial purposes or otherwise?
- 21 In the Commander or any aircraft?
- 22 Any airplane, even a small Cessna. When was the
- last time you actually, you know, hands-on flew an 23
- airplane? 24

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I think -- I think that last flight was with 25

Northrop probably in Oc -- you know, maybe
October-November of 2011.

- Q. Okay. So you've not actually flown -- either for commercial purposes or for recreation or whatever, you've not actually flown any aircraft for more than a year now; is that correct?
- 7 A. No, not a year.

- 8 Q. I'm sorry. You're right. What -- let's say more
 9 than five or six months. I miscalculated there. Is that
 10 correct?
- A. Well, my last flight was with -- was with -- in a

 Northrop Grumman airplane. And, you know, like I say, I

 think it was, you know, around November of 2011. So yeah,

 it's -- that's maybe six months.
 - Q. Okay. And sir, let me say I've got some of your medical records because I am Northrop Grumman's attorney. There was a request made of Mr. Davidson's attorney for any information I have. I could not give him your medical records without your consent, and I don't want to do that.

I guess my question at this point is, Would you have any opposition to my giving Mr. Davidson's attorney copies of medical records I've got for you post this particular incident? At least I've got records -- I've got reports from Dr. Jerome Lang and Dr. Mario Oliveira. Do you have -- again, it's up to you, sir, whether I can give

1 these records or not. I just want to find out whether you 2 have an opposition to me giving him these records or not. 3 MR. LEWIS: I don't know if I've 4 necessarily requested them. I'll make a 5 decision on that whether or not I need those or 6 not. 7 So Mr. Farmer, from my standpoint, you 8 don't need to answer that question. I haven't 9 really requested your medical records. 10 speak with Mr. Davidson and see if we need them, 11 but don't feel obligated to make them available 12 to me at this time. I'm not sure whether or not 13 I even need them for Mr. Davidson's purposes. 14 THE WITNESS: That sounds fine with me. 15 really don't feel in a position to authorize any 16 transfer of documents. 17 (Mr. Trahan continued.) Okay. That's fine, sir. 18 Are you employed in any capacity at this point, 19 Mr. Farmer? 20 No. Α. 21 Look at my notes for a second, sir. 22 I think that's all. Thank you, sir. 23 REDIRECT EXAMINATION 24 BY MR. LEWIS: 25 One last question, Mr. Davidson. Is there any doubt

in your mind that the fumes that you were exposed to in
the flight on May 31st, 2011, has resulted in the injuries
and problems that you've already described?

A. Was that for Mr. Davidson or me?

No.

a question on behalf of Mr. Davidson. Do you have any doubt in your mind that the fumes that you were exposed to has caused the problems that you've suffered from?

That's for -- that's Christian Lewis asking you

- A. That's -- that's -- yeah, I agree. I'm sure of it, because I have no other previous exposure to chemicals or anything like that. That's -- I'm sure -- I'm absolutely sure that that's the cause of my problems and probably Ken Davidson, as well.
- Q. Thank you, sir. I don't have any more questions.

And I think you -- at least in Louisiana, you have a right to read and sign your deposition. And I'd ask that if the court reporter would send a copy of this deposition to you so that you would have the opportunity to review it and, if necessary, if there's been any errors in transcribing your testimony, that you be allowed to, on an errata sheet, make any such corrections. And then at that point, you can return that sheet to the court reporter, and she can include those changes and sheet with the final copy of the deposition.

MR. LEWIS: Is that all right with you,

1	Ms. Alexander?
2	THE REPORTER: Yeah, that's fine.
3	MR. LEWIS: Okay. And as far as we
4	would like a copy of the deposition,
5	Ms. Alexander, and you have my contact
6	information. And I presume Mr Mr. Trahan
7	says that he does, also.
8	(Wherein, Deposition Exhibit 1 was marked.)
9	(Whereupon, at 9:41 a.m., the deposition was concluded.)
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